Peonies are often esteemed for their intoxicating fragrance. These scents range from sweet and rosy to citrusy and spicy. Surprisingly, not all peonies are fragrant. The double form white and pink peonies tend to be the most aromatic. Some semi-double and anemone formed peonies boast an attractive perfume as well. However, most single and red peonies do not have a scent—though there are a few exceptions. Below are some of the top-rated fragrant peonies in the Peony Garden. Smell and compare, then choose a favorite!
This peony is known for its large flowers and unusually pleasing fragrance.

This peony has a distinct two-tone quality and a pleasant fragrance.

This late blooming double peony has a deep pink center that pales to the edge of the petals.

This peony is one of the last varieties to bloom. Its large, flat, rose-pink flowers are very fragrant.

This creamy rose-pink peony is a profuse bloomer with compact ball-like flowers and a mild fragrance.

Red peonies are often not fragrant. Yet, Mary Brand breaks the stereotype with its pleasing fragrance. This crimson peony is good for both cut flowers and garden decoration.

This early pink double peony produces many flowers on sturdy stems and has a strong fragrance.

This early pink-flowering variety is somewhat dwarf and has a distinct collar of narrow, almost white petals.

This white peony opens with crimson streaks on the inner petals and a flush of tiny pink dots that fade to a creamy white.

This creamy white peony is flushed with pink and its petals form a tuft in the center of the flower. A rich gold color is suffused throughout the flower from the many stamens intermingled with the petals.

This early pink double peony produces many flowers on sturdy stems and has a strong fragrance.

This creamy white peony is noted in Mrs. Alice Harding’s book Peonies in the Little Garden as having a wonderful fragrance, but other sources say it has no scent. Either way, this fluffy, loose-flowered peony makes a lovely addition to any garden.
Famous Ladies

Many peonies are named in honor of a loved one while others are named to commemorate an event or a famous person. A number of the peonies in the Peony Garden are named after famous ladies in history. See if you can find all of these famous ladies in the Peony Garden.

Can you find other peonies in the garden named after famous people?
Famous Ladies

1. **Edith Lyttelton**
   Edith Lyttelton (1865-1948) was a British World War I-era activist, novelist, and spiritualist. She gave assistance to the unemployed in London, and she served on the War Refugees Committee during World War I. Later, Lyttelton became the Deputy Director of the Women’s Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture. Lyttelton was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1917 and Dame Grand Cross in 1929.

2. **Mrs. Alice Harding**
   Alice Harding was a gardener and writer of the early 20th century. She lived on Burnley Farm in Plainfield, New Jersey where she collected, tested, and evaluated the finest new peony varieties. Alice Harding had a rose, an iris, two French hybrid lilacs, a tree peony, and two herbaceous peonies named in her honor.

3. **Lady Alexandra Duff**
   Lady Alexandra Duff (1891-1959) was the granddaughter of King Edward VII. She served as a nurse at St. Mary’s Hospital in Paddington, and she worked on the behalf of local hospitals in South Africa. Lady Alexandra Duff had many honors bestowed upon her including Royal Red Cross 1st Class, Dame Grand Cross of the Most Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Royal Family Order of King Edward VII, and the Royal Family Order of King George V.

4. **Fanny Crosby**
   Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) was an American lyricist best known for her Protestant Christian hymns. She was stricken blind as a baby when an incompetent doctor treated her for inflammation of the eyes. She attended the New York Institution for the Blind for twelve years and remained there as a teacher for eleven more. Fanny was friends with almost every president during her lifetime and wrote more than 8,000 hymns.

5. **Sarah Bernhardt**
   Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) was a French stage and early film actress. She was brought up in a convent and began acting at age 18. She started her stage career in comic theatre and burlesque and eventually moved on to film. Sarah Bernhardt was made a member of France’s Legion of Honor in 1914. She also helped organize a military hospital in the Franco-Prussian War during the 1870s.

6. **Florence Nightingale**
   Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was born in and named after Florence, Italy. Nightingale decided to devote her life to nursing in 1844. She worked to reform military hospitals and improve medical care and living conditions for soldiers and the poor. After 1860, Nightingale’s health prevented her from physically working as a nurse, but she continued her activism through her writings. She was awarded many medals for her service.

7. **Phoebe Cary**
   Phoebe Cary (1824-1871) was an American poet and champion of women’s rights. She and her sister, Alice, began publishing poetry together, but eventually they both began publishing their own volumes. Cary also edited a newspaper published by Susan B. Anthony.

8. **Marguerite Gerard**
   Marguerite Gerard (1761-1837) was a leading French female artist. She learned much of what she knew from her brother-in-law, artist Jean-Honore. Marguerite painted in a precise, romantic style, often depicting domestic scenes and scenes of the wealthy enjoying a care-free life. Napoleon purchased her only historically themed painting and commissioned her to paint others.

9. **Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt**
   Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was the first lady in the United States from 1933 to 1945. She supported the New Deal reforms put in place by her husband, and she was an advocate for civil rights. Eleanor Roosevelt also helped begin the second wave of feminism when she was on JFK’s committee – the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.

10. **Martha Bulloch**
    Martha Bulloch (1835-1884) was the mother of U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt. She went by, ”Mittie,” and was a true southern belle. It is rumored that the character Scarlett O’Hara in Gone with the Wind is modeled after Mittie. She married Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. in 1853. Mittie died of typhoid in 1884.
Peonies have been used for food and medicine in Europe and China for hundreds, even thousands of years. It was not until the early 1800s that people started growing peonies as ornamental garden plants and breeding them for characteristics such as flower size, color, and form. The Peony Garden was opened in 1927 and holds many historic varieties of peonies. Here are some of the best of the old varieties, many of which are still available today!
Best of the Oldies

1. **Grandiflora Nivea Plena** 1824
   - This tall, early, sweetly scented peony opens pink and fades to white as the flowers age. It is highly valued for cut flowers.

2. **Festiva Maxima** 1881
   - Festiva Maxima is a classic variety that is still popular in many gardens today. Its large white flowers are edged in red and are valuable both in the garden and as cut flowers.

3. **Edulis Superba** 1824
   - This peony is believed to be one of the oldest cultivars still commercially available. It grows well in heavy soils and is an early bloomer.

4. **Monsieur Jules Elie** 1888
   - This wonderfully fragrant peony has flowers of lavender pink that hold up well even in bright sunshine. It is still a popular variety grown in today’s gardens and is often used for cut flowers.

5. **La Rosiere** 1888
   - This free flowering peony has large white flowers on wiry stems. The flowers are symmetrical and very striking.

6. **Le Cygne** 1907
   - This was one of Mrs. Alice Harding’s—a gardener and garden writer of the early 1920s—top three peonies. French for “the swan,” this white peony blossoms early and often has perfectly formed flowers.

7. **Lady Emily** 1807
   - This light rose-pink peony is the oldest peony in our collection. It has been growing happily in its current location since 1927. Lady Emily blooms with multiple flowers on each stem and is notable for its fine form.

8. **Madame Auguste Dessert** 1899
   - This brilliant pink peony has large blooms edged in silver. This excellent garden plant is free-flowering and has strong stems.

9. **La Perle** 1886
   - This spicy smelling peony is old-rose pink with an all-over lavender tone. Center petals are sometimes tinged a darker red. The flowers of Le Perle last for a long time.

10. **Triomphe de l'Exposition de Lille** 1865
    - This lovely pink peony was introduced from one of the early French breeders, Calot. The long stems make this peony an excellent cut flower.

11. **Thérèse** 1904
    - This peony produces huge flowers of pale rose-pink that have a golden glow emanating from the center. It makes an excellent show flower because of the well-developed blooms. It is an outstandingly beautiful plant.

12. **Marie Crousse** 1892
    - This pretty French peony has large, globular blooms of a pale pink. It is a typical French double that has been in gardens for over 100 years.

13. **Walter Faxon** 1904
    - This peony is named after an American ornithologist and carcinologist. It was another of Mrs. Alice Harding’s top three peonies. It has large, clear pink blossoms best when used as cut flowers.

14. **Felix Crousse** 1881
    - Félix Crousse is known for being one of the best red varieties. Its brilliant crimson flowers are often edged with silver, giving them a shimmering glow.

15. **Karl Rosenfield** 1908
    - This double, crimson peony flowers freely. It has good strong stems that make it valuable as both a garden plant and cut flower.

16. **Le Cygne** 1907
    - This tall, early, sweetly scented peony opens pink and fades to white as the flowers age. It is highly valued for cut flowers.

17. **Marie Lemoine** 1865
    - This stout little peony is another of Calot’s creations. Its large, flat, white flowers are tinged with yellow in the center. Occasionally, the central petals will be outlined in red.

18. **Solange** 1907
    - This was the third of Mrs. Alice Harding’s top three favorite peonies. This mostly white peony has large, tea-tinted flowers, which often take several days to fully open. It’s unique color makes this peony stand out.

19. **Milton Hill** 1891
    - This peony has very large, pink flowers with a luminous quality. Its fragrance is light but sweet.